

To, Massachusetts Department of Energy

In regards to the state's desire to use forest biomass as an energy source and to use taxpayer's money to subsidize this industry, I ask you to consider the following:

We don't need new inefficient power plants. We need to become more efficient. A well-managed plan to increase efficiencies over the next 10 to 12 years could reduce our energy needs by at least 20% and is by far the most cost effective way to move forward.

Using and burning forest biomass to produce energy may create the illusion of reducing CO2 but it is only an illusion that will ultimately leave us in a worse situation than we are in now.

The model below compares burning forest biomass with reducing the need for the same amount of power through increased efficiency.

Burning 200,000 tons of wood per year to produce energy, and figuring an average of 60 tree years to re-grow one ton of wood over the larger landscape of Mass forests, carbon would build up for 60 years to a level of over 6 million tons and stay at that level until the burning is stopped, then it would take 60 years to return to carbon neutral. Burning this amount of wood would produce only about 15 megawatts of power per year. If, instead of burning our forests to produce this 15 mw of power, we take the simple steps of reducing our need for the 15 megawatts through increased efficiency, at the end of 60 years we would have a net decrease of 6 million tons of atmospheric carbon. The difference between burning forest biomass and efficiency in this case is 12 million tons of atmospheric CO2 in a 60 year time frame. Whether one agrees with the exact numbers in this model or not, the point is that increased efficiency will always be the most effective way to reduce our carbon output.

If our goals are to:

- ~ reduce atmospheric carbon,
- ~ reduce the increases in the cost of living brought on by higher energy costs,
- ~ maintain the forest ecosystem we live in, in as healthy a state as possible,
- ~ maintain or improve the quality of life and reduce health care costs for the citizens of Mass,

Then:

- ~ increased efficiency is the best and most cost effective way to achieve these goals.

In closing I would like to state that the use of forest biomass as an energy source should not in any way shape or form, fit into the state's renewable energy portfolio.

Peter Joppe
Shelburne, MA